

That Russian Radiation

THE ATTITUDE of the State Department toward the continuing and possibly harmful microwave radiation that the Russians have been beaming at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow defies belief. One would think the department would have demanded long ago that this nerve-racking threat to the health of Americans—its own employees, after all—be terminated. But no. The radiation has gone on for years. In the months since it became public knowledge, the department has pussyfooted inexcusably. The other day, for instance, a department spokesman contended that radiation at the present reduced level poses "no cause for concern." He reported, however, that a \$800,000—yes, \$800,000—study had been commissioned of embassy medical records. A light slap on the Russians' wrist was delivered. Negotiations will continue, it was declared.

The radiation is, of course, not only a health hazard of uncertain dimensions but a continuing affront to the national dignity of the United States. Why does the State Department take this double blow so mildly? What is there to negotiate? Evidently the Russians are directing the beams at American electronics

equipment on or in the embassy building; diplomats and their families live on the lower floors. But the United States, or so it is contended without Soviet denial, does not try to interfere with or counter Soviet electronics equipment on the Soviet embassy building in the same way here in Washington. Does the United States, which pokes its electronic beams all around the globe, fear that a strong protest against Russian radiation will elicit or legitimize other countries' protests against American radiation? If this is so, then it ought to be conceded directly, so that there can be a reasoned public discussion of the whole problem as it affects foreigners as well as Americans.

Meanwhile, the physical and psychological well-being of American personnel in Moscow deserve to be served by whatever measures are necessary for that purpose. In the absence of conclusive medical evidence to the contrary, it has to be assumed that the Russians are endangering the health, not to say the lives, of American citizens, and they should not be allowed to continue doing it.